

NEWS BRIEFING

ASSISTANT SECRETARY ARTHUR SYLVESTER

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Monday, October 29, 1962

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The Pentagon

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12:00 Noon

MR. SYLVESTER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. At the same time that I am making this announcement, Mr. Salinger is making it at the White House, and that is that he, on behalf of the White House, is notifying the media that we are no longer asking them to follow the guidelines which they had been following. Our own guidelines here in the Defense Department will, of course, continue just as firmly as they have in the past.

I imagine you are going to ask me "What about the quarantine?" The answer is that the ships will remain on station pending arrangements by the UN for effective inspection. I shall not be able to comment further. Any questions on that I am afraid will be fruitless.

I imagine you will ask me what about surveillance. My answer to that will be I presume it is continuing. I cannot go beyond that at this time.

You may know and you have probably seen on the news printer that a special committee has gone to the United Nations. Mr. Salinger announced that it is made up of Mr. Gilpatric, Mr. George Ball, and Mr. McCloy, to work out details for the arrangements for inspection. They will be under Mr. Rusk, Mr. McNamara, and Mr. Stevenson. They will be reporting to the President. That announcement is not being made here. I am catching any of you up on it who may not have had an opportunity to see it.

QUESTION: Could you tell us what we know, what is the latest word we have about whether or not the base construction has been stopped?

MR. SYLVESTER: I can't be any help to you on that.

QUESTION: Except you do say the surveillance is continuing?

MR. SYLVESTER: I said I presume it is continuing. I can't go beyond that.

MORE

QUESTION: Will we have to wait for the United Nations to announce the dismantling of these bases?

MR. SYLVESTER: I wouldn't make any assumption one way or the other, Fred.

QUESTION: Art, we have had no report from you since Saturday night on the results of this aerial surveillance. Can't you update it past that period?

MR. SYLVESTER: I am afraid I can't.

QUESTION: Art, nothing is being said about checking to see if there is a submarine base or could be. What are we going to do to make sure they don't leave one of those?

MR. SYLVESTER: There is a presumption in your question that there is one there, is there not?

QUESTION: There is a presumption in my question that the matter should be gone into and we should know what the situation is.

MR. SYLVESTER: The other presumption is that it has not been gone into. I don't accept either presumption.

QUESTION: I don't mean to presume one way or the other. I just want to know are we going to do something to take adequate steps to see that the Russians don't leave a submarine base?

MR. SYLVESTER: I would not expect a Russian submarine base to be left in Cuba, assuming the premise which you have made, and I don't assume it.

QUESTION: This point has been raised before, and certainly by other people. In all of these negotiations there seems to be a gap here. There seems to be no treatment of possible submarine bases.

MR. SYLVESTER: I know of no evidence of a Russian submarine base in Cuba.

QUESTION: Will something be done about that to make sure there is none?

MR. SYLVESTER: The assumption you are making is that nothing has been done. This I don't accept at all.

QUESTION: There was no evidence for awhile that there were missiles down there either?

MR. SYLVESTER: I think the pictures of the time sequence put out last night indicated very clearly the time sequence in which those missile bases went up.

QUESTION: Could you say anything about the talk now that possibly the United Nations will take over the duties of aerial surveillance of the Cuban missile sites?

MR. SYLVESTER: No, I am not free to discuss that in any way, Bill.

QUESTION: Arthur, will those ships on station out there stop ships coming in or are they just going to sit out there on station?

MR. SYLVESTER: I would not comment any further than that they will remain on station.

QUESTION: Will our aerial surveillance reports go to the UN? Is this the way the thing will be set up, or will there be on-the-spot inspections, or both?

MR. SYLVESTER: Regarding the arrangements worked out, I would not be in a position to comment, nor would anybody else here. How the inspection will be made is now in the hands -- from our point of view, from our side -- in the hands of Mr. Gelpi, Mr. Ball and Mr. McCloy, working with the UN. They, in turn, are working under Mr. Stevenson, Mr. Busk and Mr. McNamara, and they, in turn, working under the President.

QUESTION: Is there any plan to release the 14,000 Air Force Reservists?

MR. SYLVESTER: None that I know of today.

QUESTION: Are they still at their home stations?

MR. SYLVESTER: As you know, we don't discuss the movements of various units at any time under a situation like this.

QUESTION: Are there any plans to call up any more Reserves?

MR. SYLVESTER: At this time I know of no such plans.

QUESTION: Do you know whether the "early outs" for Christmas for some troops in the Air Force and in the Army for example, will continue?

MR. SYLVESTER: No order has been issued to make any change in that situation.

QUESTION: Arthur, there is a story on the ticker just now that you are not going to go ahead with any plans to send reporters to the Fleet or Guantanamo. Is this an announcement which I haven't heard or is this true, and if so, what is the basis for it, or the reasons behind it?

MR. SYLVESTER: It is a completely changed situation at this time.

QUESTION: You mean there is no need to have any reporters reporting on a non-blockade or lack of ships, or what?

MR. SYLVESTER: I think I will let it stand at that, John.

QUESTION: You do have such an announcement?

MR. SYLVESTER: We made it Saturday night.

QUESTION: Will you have a report on the status of missile bases later on today or is there to be a blackout on that the rest of the day?

More

MR. SYLVESTER: I can't be any help to you on that now. The reports on the status of them are being discussed . . . arrangements to make such an inspection, with the UN. At this time we are not saying anything.

QUESTION: Mr. Sylvester, are Mr. Gilpatric and Mr. Ball and Mr. McCloy going to have any military talent helping them?

MR. SYLVESTER: In what way do you mean?

QUESTION: Are they going to have any military-skilled people advising them and telling them what the problems are down there and what they are seeing and what to look for?

MR. SYLVESTER: I wouldn't worry about it.

QUESTION: There are some people in the country who do worry about Mr. Gilpatric and Mr. McCloy and Mr. Ball's military knowledge.

MR. SYLVESTER: I would think that those people are worrying less today as a result of what has happened, seeing Mr. Khrushchev agree to dismantle . . .

QUESTION: Will you answer this question and not give me your opinion?

MR. SYLVESTER: I would be glad to. I think if you will watch the situation and watch the group who are working here, your answer will come from that. I am not prepared to go beyond just what I have said.

QUESTION: Could you tell us anything about our response to the Indian request for arms aid?

MR. SYLVESTER: The details of it are now being worked out. We have not made any announcement yet, but the announcement the State Department is making, or has made, is that we are going to give them aid, and when the details are worked out, an announcement to that effect will be made.

QUESTION: Today, do you think?

MR. SYLVESTER: I can't tell you now. I am not speaking for them.

QUESTION: Will it come from here?

MR. SYLVESTER: I am not clear whether from here or the State Department. The channel would be through the State Department. The arrangements for the execution of it will probably come from here. This is all in an "iffy" stage in the sense of the details, and I'm not the source of the details.

QUESTION: Do we have any further or can we expect any further details about the loss of the American pilot? I notice he was decorated this morning by the Commander of SAC.

MR. SYLVESTER: That would be the extent of our further information.

QUESTION: Was that a posthumous decoration?

MR. SYLVESTER: The decoration I read, it said missing in action, M.I.A.

QUESTION: There have been reports that he is alive.

MR. SYLVESTER: I wouldn't go any further, Bill, than just what that decoration said.

QUESTION: Anything about Guantanamo Bay and Castro's demand?

MR. SYLVESTER: I haven't seen anything on it, Sarah. I haven't see any movement by our people other than to stay right there.

THE PRESS: Thank you.